

**VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**Mt. Abraham Union High School Auditorium, 7 Airport Drive, Bristol, Vermont**  
**April 14, 2009**

*The State Board of Education shall sustain a vision of high skills, creative thinking, and love of knowledge and learning for every student by setting education policy that ensures student achievement in a safe and healthy learning environment.*

**Approved Minutes – April 14, 2009**

**Present: Board Members: Tom James, Chair; John Hall; Ruth Stokes, Vice-chair; Tess Savage; Kathy Larsen; Judith Livingston; Don Collins; Alex Melville**

**DOE: Armando Vilaseca, Commissioner; Carol King; Jill Remick; Bill Romond; Rae Ann Knopf; Mark Oettinger; Danna Cooper; John Fischer; Gail Taylor; Kay Charron**

**Other: Jim White, ACT; Larry Rich, ACT; Dwight Davis; Matthew Zarro, College Board; Paulette Bogan, Mt. Abe 9-12 Principal; Bonita Bedard, Starksboro school board member; David Cyprian, VSA; Rick Hilton, Lyndon Institute; Evelyn Howard, superintendent; Karrin Wilks, VSC; Tom Tailer, Mt. Abe physics teacher; John Clarke, Starksboro school board member; Leon Wheeler, Mt. Abe 7-9 principal; Sara Taggart, Sophie Conner, Hannah Fasey, members of the Mt. Abraham UHS community council; Nancy Yannett, Dean of Students; Andy Kepes, incoming Principal**

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**Preliminaries**

**Item A: Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance**

Tom James, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. Mt. Abraham Principal Paulette Bogan welcomed the Board, noted Tess Savage as the official hostess, and gave the Board some history on the school and explained current initiatives.

**Item B: Roll Call and Introductions**

Chair, Board members introduced themselves, as did others in attendance.

**Item C: Announcements, Board Member Updates (Chair, Board Members)**

Kathy Larsen shared that the newest National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) mailing includes several items directly related to the Board's work, especially in the area of Transformation.

Ruth Stokes noted the close ties to the work at Mt. Abraham Union High School and the Transformation effort, and suggested the Board had a role in spreading the word about Transformation examples.

James noted recent media articles about the Board being anti-school choice, which is not the case. James noted that he has been on the Board for six years and it has always supported school choice as a concept. He requests to have the topic of school choice on the next meeting agenda. Don Collins noted that a school choice bill in the past Legislative session did pass out of House Education but was not moved forward by House Appropriations. He felt there was support for

school choice. He asked for someone to find out what happened to that bill. James also noted that he and Commissioner Vilaseca met recently with the chairs of the House and Senate Education Committees and will continue to keep cross-communication going with the Legislature.

He also shared that he spoke with Jim Fitzpatrick, superintendent, Essex Town School District, about the school's planned Edge Academy, targeting students ages 9-13. James invited Superintendent Fitzpatrick to the May meeting. He noted that there are more and more examples of Transformation happening around the state.

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**Item D: SBE Strategic Plan** (Tom James, Board members)

The Board is due to update its Strategic Plan, pursuant to 16 V.S.A. §180. They will spend much of their June 22-23 planning session on that topic.

**Item E: SBE Annual Evaluation** (Tom James, Board members)

Board members will do an annual evaluation, likely in October or November.

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**Item F: March Monthly Report**

Chair James reminded the audience that this monthly communication tool is designed to keep everyone better informed to the work going on at the Board meetings.

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**Item G: Public to be Heard**

This is for any member of the public to speak on items not on the day's agenda.

Dwight Davis distributed information on recent Community High School of Vermont graduates.

Bonita Bedard, Starksboro school board member, asked the Board to explain their position on school choice. She questioned how the funding would work, if parents would have to make up the difference. She noted that at Robinson School they have a significant poverty issue. She is concerned about how school choice would help those kids. She asked about the governance of the State Board and noted that her board is using a policy governance structure. Chair James explained the structure of the Board and its relationship with the commissioner.

Tom Tailer, physics teacher at Mt. Abraham, spoke to the Board about the NECAP assessments. He said there are some students who take the test very seriously. He took the Math assessment and read the English one and found them to be good assessments. The Science one was frustrating and non-engaging. He hypothesized that this is across the state. He believes that some schools will add points to students' actual grades to help student engagement and motivation. He thinks that having this as part of a student's transcript might help. He recommends the Board discuss how different schools around the state are approaching the assessment. He felt the science test also really was a reading ability test.

Commissioner Vilaseca spoke to the Board on issues with the NECAP for math and science that are actually reading challenges. He has concerns about English Language Learners (ELL students) who are required to take the Math exam when in fact they need to have the reading comprehension skills in place. He commented on the motivation for high school students because there is a lack of connection to their real needs such as transcripts. There is little incentive for the

students to give it their all. He is working with the Vermont State Colleges to use the exams as part of the college entrance process. Not only do high school students need to see the relevance, but so do school administrators and higher education. Tess Savage questioned the NECAP and its alignment to SAT and ACT for use for college entrance. Stokes explained the purpose of the NECAP and its alignment with other assessments. Taler suggested the Board let teachers know how other schools motivate their students. Larsen commented that Taler's taking the test was a good motivator itself and that she hopes that the teachers who are creating the test also take it. Collins encouraged practitioners to contact the Board and the department to provide this kind of feedback.

Vilaseca noted that Arne Duncan, USED Secretary, is looking at national standards and that a national assessment may be in the offing. He noted that the *Race to the Top* ARRA grants are for states to partner to provide a template for this. He noted that the NECAP four-state collaboration indicates that Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Maine are ahead of the curve in this area.

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#### **Item H: Commissioner's Update**

Commissioner Vilaseca updated the Board on the budget. He noted that 20 employees may receive RIF notices this week, which is about 10 percent of the department's staff. This is at a time when there will be additional demands on the DOE because of ARRA implementation requirements. He noted he will have to make some changes to the original list because of statutory requirements. One of the positions is a child nutrition consultant which he is hearing concerns about, which works with in home-childcare centers and adult day care centers. He thinks the department is spread too thin and doing things beyond statutory requirements. There are also some home school positions that would require legislative change. He will be meeting with Susan Schill and Retta Dunlap regarding home school issues. He has been working with staff on revamping the department and how it serves the field, especially regarding communication and collaboration, noting that the department needs to have teams working with schools and keeping in communication. He wants the field to be able to turn to the department for assistance. He also wants to have better communication with the Legislature so legislators contact the department prior to generating a new issue.

Vilaseca reported that this Friday he will head to a CCSSO meeting in Chicago, then LA for the Milken National Educator Conference.

He also noted that the field is experiencing difficulty with special education audits. Collins questioned if because there was a new commissioner people were trying to push back, or if there really were recent changes that are more cumbersome.

#### **Item I: Legislative Update**

Mark Oettinger addressed the Board about the month left in the Legislative session. Act 1 of 2009 is the Brooke Bennett bill which contains some education-related aspects on which the field has asked the department for technical assistance. He filled the Board in on current education-related legislation. He also thanked intern Danna Cooper for her work during the legislative session. Stokes also asked about a bill in Senate education that would give the commissioner or the Board authority to decide residency disagreements. Commissioner Vilaseca, Oettinger and other department staff worked with Legislative Council to draft legislation on high school completion. Collins noted his pleasure regarding that collaborative effort. They discussed at

length the current school choice designation bill in the Legislature. John Hall noted that capacity could be an issue for small schools.

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#### **Item J: FY 2009 & 2010 Budget/ARRA (Stimulus) Update**

Armando Vilaseca, Rae Ann Knopf, Bill Romond spoke to the Board. Knopf, the Assistant Division Director for Student Support, has taken on the role of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA - or stimulus - bill) coordinator in addition to her regular duties. She gave the Board an overview of work currently being done and guidance that is currently available. There are 77 million dollars coming to Vermont for education. She reiterated that the funds must be given directly to school districts or higher education institutions. The governor's office recently released a press release regarding the use of ARRA funds for school spending at level funding. They cannot be used for paying down debt or other uses. James asked if any of the money is allocated for the department. It is not. ARRA does present a significant increase in accountability and reporting, and we hope to guide and support schools in providing a transformational educational opportunity for students. Collins asked if schools could contract with the department to provide specific expertise. Schools will not get more than what they have already budgeted for. Stokes questioned if the stimulus funds would replace money that the school budgets would have gotten out of the education fund. She questioned what would happen to the money already raised in the education fund. She questioned if this was the elephant in the room, that the state is using the money for something else. Vilaseca explained that because of this surplus in the education fund, this money will carry the state even further into 2011. Livingston noted that it would likely mean that less general funds would go to the education fund, and that it is a small amount of money compared to the general fund. Knopf concluded the Governor and Legislature would have to agree on that aspect of this. James questioned the ability of the department to do this work without additional funds and resources. There is legislation that would support the department with six positions. Melville asked about the *Race to the Top* initiative, which is a multi-state competitive grant program worth 5 billion dollars. The statewide student management system grant program was also discussed. Knopf thinks the Transformation work will be of assistance to this initiative. Romond noted that Vermont has been approached by other states to be a part of a collaborative, but is already further along with our New England Secondary School Consortium and New England Common Assessment Program.

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#### **Lunch - Mt. Abraham UHS Community Council**

The Board adjourned for lunch at 12:11 p.m. During lunch three members of the Mt. Abraham UHS student community council, Sara Taggart, Sophie Conner, and Hannah Fasey, joined the Board and discussed the process of community decision making used at the school. Recent topics the council has addressed include a school cell phone policy and the appropriate care and disposition of trash.

The meeting was called back to order at 1:04 p.m.

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## **Action Item**

### **Item K: Consent Agenda**

**Motion:** Stokes moved, Savage seconded, to accept the consent agenda with comment. Larsen asked if the technology plan was part of the consent agenda, noting that it asks for plans to be sent to the department for review.

1. **Minutes of March 17, 2009 SBE Meeting**
2. **SBE Survey Policy** (Armando Vilaseca, Mark Oettinger)
3. **Statewide Technology Plan** (Peter Drescher, Bill Romond)

The motion passed 7-0.

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## **Discussion Items**

### **Item L: 2009 AYP Determinations** (Gail Taylor)

Gail Taylor provided an overview of the 2009 Adequate Yearly Progress results. 218 schools made AYP. More schools made AYP this year than last, but more schools also entered the School Improvement system. Stokes asked about what subgroups were more often identified. Now that there are four years of assessment data, department staff are working to find out what successful schools are doing to meet the needs of the different subgroups. Taylor also discussed the poverty study that the department is currently undertaking which surveys schools that have “beat the odds.” Taylor gave some examples of school strategies for targeted instruction and improving results. Stokes asked what kind of public questioning rose from the release of these results.

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## **Transformation of Education**

### **Item M: Transformation Activities and Policy Commission Updates** (Bill Romond; Kay Charron)

Kay Charron updated the Board about the work of the Transformation Policy Commission. Charron handed out a document titled “Very Preliminary Thinking by Policy Commission” which outlines work to date. She explained that minutes and other Policy Commission Documents are available on the Web site ([http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/transformation/commission\\_resources.html](http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/dept/transformation/commission_resources.html)). Stokes commended the commission (including Board members Tom James and Don Collins) on its work to date. Larsen noted the connection between this work and the development of the Strategic Plan.

Romond reported several Transformational examples at schools across the state. He also noted current partnerships being created.

Evelyn Howard, superintendent of schools for the Addison Northeast Supervisory Union, spoke to the Board about the work currently going on in those districts and the link to the Transformation effort, noting that the school recently received a grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation to explore Alternate Pathways.

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### **Item N: Dual Enrollment**

Karrin Wilks, Senior Vice President, Vermont State Colleges, spoke to the Board about the Vermont State Colleges dual enrollment program and discussed some policy suggestions. She outlined the benefits to dual enrollment to students with the goal of increasing secondary completion and post secondary aspirations and attainment. She gave the Board a brief history of the dual enrollment program, and explained the development of the Introduction to College Studies course through Community College of Vermont (CCV). She answered several questions from the Board regarding how dual enrollment works. She noted the Web site <http://www.earlycolleges.org>. Commissioner Vilaseca indicated that he has approached incoming Chancellor Tim Donovan asking that the credits earned by students for these courses count as a full credit toward graduation.

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### **Item O: Future Agendas (Board members; Armando Vilaseca; Carol King)**

Carol King led the Board in developing future agendas. The May 19<sup>th</sup> meeting will be held at the Northwest Technical Center in St. Albans; June 22-23 will be the Board's annual planning meeting, to be held at Lake Morey, Fairlee.

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### **Adjourn**

**Motion:** At 3:00 p.m., Tess Savage moved, Ruth Stokes seconded, to adjourn the April 14, 2009 State Board of Education meeting. The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

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### **Annual Student Recognition (Mt. Abraham UHS Auditorium) (Tess Savage, Kathy Larsen)**

The Board hosted its fourth student recognition ceremony during which students from around the state were honored for their academic and leadership excellence (see [http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/board/educ\\_student\\_recognition.pdf](http://education.vermont.gov/new/pdfdoc/board/educ_student_recognition.pdf)). Board member and Mt Abraham UHS senior Tess Savage emceed the program; Kathy Larsen and Board Chair Tom James, assisted by Commissioner Armando Vilaseca, presented certificates to the more than 30 students present.

Minutes recorded by Jill Remick  
Minutes prepared by Carol King